

Subject:**CARE TO LEARN (NI) SCHEME****Circular Number:**
FE 03/17**Date of Issue:**
20 June 2017**Target Audience:**

- Principals/Directors/Chief Executives of FE Colleges
- Chairs of Governing Bodies
- FE College Finance Officers
- Colleges NI
- College Student Support Officers

Summary of Contents:

This circular sets out the terms and conditions for the payment of the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme, which provides childcare support to students, aged under 20, at the start of the course.

The following key points should be noted:

- students who work part-time and are in receipt of assistance with childcare via Working Tax Credits are eligible to apply for assistance under Care to Learn provided that the official HM Revenue & Customs notification clearly shows that their childcare element only covers the time the student or their partner works and not their time in an FE College.
- the maximum assistance for all costs including travel is up to £165 per week for each child.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this circular should be addressed to:

Further Education Policy Development
Department for the Economy
Adelaide House
39 – 49 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8FD

Status of Contents:
Information**Related Documents:**
N/A**Superseded Documents:**
Circular FE 07/16**Expiry Date:**
N/A**DfE Website:**
www.economy-ni.gov.ukTel: 028 90 257578
Fax: 028 90 257528Email:
fepolicy@economy-ni.gov.uk

Purpose

1. In line with its objective of widening access to further education (FE), the Department is continuing the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme, with effect from 1 August 2017. The Scheme addresses the need to provide childcare support for parents, aged under 20, at the start of their course of study in an FE college.

Eligibility

Students

2. To be eligible, a student must, during their course of study, be, or become:
 - the main carer of their child/children;
 - at least 16 years old;
 - under 20 years of age at the start of their course of study; and
 - meet residency requirements, in accordance with the prevailing Education (Student Support) Regulations (Northern Ireland).
3. Assistance under the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme will not be available to any student until their sixteenth birthday. Students under the minimum school-leaving age, who are studying at an FE college, will not be eligible for assistance under the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme, but should be referred to the Education Welfare Service of the Education Authority.
4. A student receiving assistance under the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme, who becomes 20 years of age during their course of study, may remain on the Scheme.
5. Students or their partner, or parents/guardians of students, in receipt of childcare support for the student's child/children from other sources, including Tax Credits, Universal Credit, Childcare Grant, or any other DfE or EU-funded programmes, are not eligible for assistance under the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme. (n.b: Students with dependent children in registered or approved childcare are not eligible to receive assistance under Care to Learn if they or their partner receive the Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit from HM Revenue & Customs; unless the official HM Revenue & Customs notification clearly shows that their childcare element only covers the time the student or their partner works and not their time in an FE College, the College can then consider allowing childcare costs for the time the student is actually attending the college.
6. A new application must be made for each academic year, including whenever the course recorded on the original application spans more than one academic year.
7. To help provide consistency across the sector, an application form template is attached at Annex D.

Courses

8. The scheme is open to full-time and part-time FE students and HE students, enrolled in an FE college on regulated professional and technical courses, and listed on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ). This covers regulated courses from Entry Level to Level 5.
9. Details of the course duration must be recorded and kept for audit purposes.

Childcare provision

10. The childcare provider must be a childminder, pre-school playgroup, day nursery, out-of-school club, or other provider, registered with a Health & Social Services Board. Definitions of each of these types of childcare are given, for clarification purposes, at Annex A.
11. The choice of childcarer is the sole responsibility of the parent. The college should accept no responsibility in relation to risks, accidents or payments owing outside any approved period.

The college **must** seek and retain:

- confirmation of the childcarer's registration (evidence of confirmation must be retained);
 - a copy of the parent's original birth certificate;
 - a copy of the original birth certificate for the child/children (long birth certificate);
 - a copy of the student's timetable;
 - confirmation that Tax Credits / Universal Credit paid to the student or their partner, or parent/guardian of the student, are not in respect of childcare for the student's child/children (any childcare hours being requested for Care to Learn payments must not already be being funded from Child Tax Credits / Universal Credit); and
 - a signed statement from the childcarer to allow payment to be made directly to the carer (the parent should be advised of the payment procedure beforehand).
12. Students may change their childcare provider during the academic year (for example, because they are unhappy with the childcare being provided, or have found a more convenient provider). The new childcare provider must fulfil all eligibility requirements, as detailed in paragraph 10. However, the agreement of the college should be sought, prior to any change.
 13. Where a childcare provider is related to the child, that childcare provider must, in addition to fulfilling the eligibility requirements:
 - live apart from the child at a different postal address; and
 - be providing registered childcare services for other children to whom they are not related.

Assistance available

14. Assistance will be provided on the basis of actual costs of childcare, including any deposit normally required and reasonable associated travel costs to and from the childcarer, where these costs are in addition to their normal travel costs from home to college (note: where more than one child is involved, reduced costs may apply, particularly in relation to travel costs).
15. The maximum assistance available for all costs including travel, associated with registered childcare, as detailed above at paragraph 14, is up to £165 per week for each child. Payment made will be based on actual costs, especially where reductions are made for more than one child.

16. Childcare costs may include a retainer fee or contract payments to the childcarer to ensure the childcare place is kept available during such periods as term and summer breaks. Please note that summer retainer fees will only apply when students are completing a two-year course of study. A retainer fee must not be more than the amount paid to the childcarer during term-time. Any retainer fee should be agreed in advance between the college and the childcare provider.
17. If both parents are in education, and eligible for any assistance towards childcare costs, the main carer of the child(ren) will be assisted.

The scheme will support reasonable childcare hours in excess of learning hours to allow for travel between the college and the childcare provider. As detailed in paragraph 14, additional travel costs, associated with childcare, should be based on actual reasonable costs to allow the student to attend the course of study. Payments should also be based on the most cost-effective mode of travel. (Colleges are asked to confirm that the travel costs, claimed by the student, are reasonable, based on local knowledge).

18. To help provide consistency across the sector, an invoice template for childcare providers is attached at Annex C.

Attendance

19. Childcare assistance should only be provided for the period of time required to allow the parent to attend their course of study. Colleges should closely monitor student attendance to determine the continued need for childcare support.
20. Attendance should be monitored on a monthly basis, or more frequently if necessary, to confirm that the student is continuing to attend their course of study, and that the child is attending the relevant childcare provision. In general, it would be expected that a student is attending for all the hours stated in their application form, but it is recognised that there will be occasions where it is not possible for the student to attend (for example, because of illness or family emergency). Therefore, colleges may use their discretion in relation to the guidelines provided below, when considering qualifying attendance.

The following guidelines should be applied:

- attendance of 80% or above is eligible for full childcare costs;
- attendance of between 60% and 80% is eligible for childcare costs, relative to the actual percentage of attendance;
- attendance which falls below 60% should be referred to the Student Support Officer for consideration.

Payment will be made in arrears, on a term/monthly/weekly basis. Electronic registers should be used, where possible, to verify a student's attendance, when receiving funding under the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme.

Payments

21. Payments in respect of childcare provision should not be made in advance, and should be made directly to the childcare provider. Payments in respect of related

travel costs should be made to the eligible parent. All childcare payments **must** be accompanied by the following information:

- evidence of payments made to the childcarer;
- evidence of travel costs paid to the student;
- a record of the student's attendance; and
- a copy of the student's timetable.

Allocations

22. There will be no initial allocation to colleges – rather, each application form should be examined and assessed by the college, in line with paragraphs 2-13, and, if approved, a request for funding should be forwarded to the Department, with brief details of costings, using the form at Annex B. The Department will aim to provide the funding as soon as possible, and, in most cases, within 5 working days.

Requests for funding should be forwarded to:

Colin Irwin
Further Education Finance Branch
Third Floor
Department for the Economy
Adelaide House
39 – 49 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8FD

Accountability

23. The Principal/Director/Chief Executive of each college shall:
- ensure that, for the purposes of administering these funds, the college maintains and operates an adequate system of record-keeping, financial management and internal controls, including safeguards against fraud and shall require the college's external auditors, as part of their audit, to report on the adequacy, or otherwise, of that system;
 - ensure that the college uses the funding provided, in a manner consistent with the purposes for which the grant was given by the Department and complies with any terms and conditions attached to it; and
 - provide such returns, as may be required by the Department.

In addition to requesting payment of the funds from the Department, the Department shall require each college to include an appropriate note, within the college's audited accounts, indicating the funding drawn down from the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme. Auditors shall be required to certify that funds, provided by the Department, have been applied in accordance with the Financial Memorandum, and any other terms and conditions applied to them, including those set out in this circular.

Original and signed copies of all Care to Learn (NI) Scheme documents must be retained for audit purposes.

Revision

24. The Department may, at any time, revise, revoke, or add to any of the terms and conditions in this document.

Interpretation

25. Questions arising from the interpretation of the arrangements in this document shall be resolved by the Department, following consultation with colleges.

Note

26. The conditions of FE circular 03/17 will apply only to students who begin their course of study in the 2017/18 academic year.

Definitions of childcare provision

A Childminder - a person registered to look after one or more children under the age of eight, who looks after the child/children in their own home, for a total of more than two hours in any day, and receives payment for the care given to the child/children.

Day Nursery – an establishment which provides day care for children under the age of eight, for four hours or more in any day, where the premises are not the carer's (for example, day nurseries, children's centres, and some family centres).

Crèche – an establishment which provides occasional care for children under the age of eight in a particular place, on more than five days a year; a crèche needs to be registered if it operates for more than two hours a day, even if some children attend for shorter periods; some crèches are in permanent premises and care for children, while parents are engaged in particular activities (e.g. shopping or sport); others are held on a temporary basis to care for children, while their parents are involved in activities for a certain length of time (e.g. training, a conference or exhibition).

Out-of-school Childcare – provision of day care for children under the age of eight, for more than two hours a day, and more than five days a year, which is available, either, before or after school, and during school holidays.

Pre-school playgroup – provision of childcare for children under the age of eight, for up to four hours a day; the building is not someone's home; the child may go to either morning or afternoon sessions; the child must not attend more than five sessions a week; care is part-time, and allows children to play with other children of their own age, and to be involved in a variety of activities.

CARE TO LEARN (NI) SCHEME CLAIM FORM

College Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

SECTION 1 - Financial data

	TOTAL
Period of Claim	
Total Amount claimed under Care to Learn, for this period	

SECTION 2 - Total number of students

	Further Education		Higher Education		Total	
	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT
(i) Number of students who applied for assistance during the period						
(ii) Number of students assisted during the period (including (i))						
(iii) Estimated number of students who did not start, or continue their course, due to being refused help						
(iv) Number of students included in (ii) (above), known to have left before completing their course						

Colleges should provide relevant papers to verify this claim and retain all relevant papers for audit purposes.

Requests for funding should be forwarded to: Colin Irwin, Further Education Finance Branch, Third Floor, Department for the Economy, Adelaide House, 39 – 49 Adelaide Street, BELFAST, BT2 8FD.

CARE TO LEARN (NI) SCHEME INVOICE

Invoice Number: _____

Date: _____

Further Education College: _____

Name of Child Care Provider: _____ Reg No: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Contact Telephone Number: _____

Student Name: _____

Child/Children's Name(s): _____

Period of Claim: From: _____ To: _____

Rate Charged: Hourly/Daily/Weekly - £												
Week Commencing	Mon		Tue		Wed		Thur		Fri		Total	
	Hrs	£	Hrs	£	Hrs	£	Hrs	£	Hrs	£	Hrs	£

Retainer Paid:

Period: _____ Amount: _____

I certify that the information, contained on this form, is accurate, and records have been maintained for audit purposes.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Position within Organisation: _____

CARE TO LEARN (NI) SCHEME APPLICATION 2017/2018

PERSONAL DETAILS						OFFICIAL USE ONLY				
SURNAME			Forename			Date Submitted				
DOB	/ /		Age (at start of course)			Applicant's Birth Certificate				
STUDENT ID			NATIONAL INSURANCE NO.			Child's Birth Certificate				
ADDRESS						Childminder's Registration				
						Benefit(s) Received				
						Student's Timetable				
						Authorised Officer's Initials				
POSTCODE										
PHONE NO.										
MOBILE NO.										
E-MAIL:										
<p>ARE YOU OR YOUR PARTNER, PARENT / GUARDIAN IN RECEIPT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN, SUCH AS CHILD TAX CREDITS (WHICH INCLUDES PROVISION OF CHILDCARE), UNIVERSAL CREDIT, CHILDCARE GRANT, ETC?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>IF YES, PLEASE GIVE DETAILS:</p>										
ARE YOU?	The Mother		The Father		The Person Having Parental Responsibility					
COURSE INFO	1 ST Year <input type="checkbox"/> 2 ND Year <input type="checkbox"/> FULL TIME <input type="checkbox"/> PART TIME <input type="checkbox"/> COURSE DURATION _____									
COURSE TITLE										
COURSE CODE										
CAMPUS										
COURSE START DATE										
COURSE COMPLETION DATE										
WEEKLY ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT (INCLUDING ANY PLACEMENTS)										
DAY	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
HOURS	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish

DETAILS OF CHILD(REN) WHO REQUIRE CHILDCARE		
FORENAME	SURNAME	DATE OF BIRTH
		/ /
		/ /
		/ /

STUDENT BANK DETAILS (ONLY TO BE COMPLETED FOR STUDENTS CLAIMING TRAVEL COSTS)

Name of Bank / Building Society											
Address											
Sort Code											
Account Number											
Bank A/C Name, as appears exactly on your bank statement (e.g. Miss S Smyth or Susan Smyth or Ms S Smyth)											

You must get your tutor / course co-ordinator to complete this section. **Forms without a relevant signature will not be accepted.**

PROGRESS			
ENROLLED	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	COURSE TUTOR	
IN ATTENDANCE	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	SIGNED:	DATED: __/__/__

DECLARATION

I declare that:

1. I am participating in Further / Higher Education Provision, on a non-employed basis, am at least 16 years old and under 20 years of age at the start of the course of study.
2. The College has confirmed that I meet residency requirements, in accordance with the Further Education (Student Support) (Eligibility) Regulations (NI).
3. I or my partner, parent/guardian are not in receipt of, or eligible for, childcare support from other sources (e.g. Tax Credits / Universal Credit which include childcare costs).

I have read and agree with the terms and conditions in the guidance note (page 15).

- The information, which I have given, is correct and complete. The information provided on this form may be made available to other departments / agencies for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime.
- I enclose my original long birth certificate, and that/those of my child(ren), and any other evidence to support my application.

SIGNED: _____ (APPLICANT)

DATE: __/__/__

APPROVED BY: _____ (STUDENT SERVICES)

DATE: __/__/__

DISCLAIMER – (important, please read)

The choice of childcare is the sole responsibility of the parent/person having parental responsibility.

The College does not accept responsibility for any risks or accidents, which may arise when a child is in the care of a Registered Childminder, Nursery or other carer. The College cannot accept responsibility for contractual arrangements with a Registered Childminder or other carer, which result in payment being due for a period when the applicant is not participating in Further / Higher Education Provision. (Note: retainer fee or contract payments may apply when Students are completing a two-year course of study).

IF YOU SUBMIT AN APPLICATION WITH INSUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION, IT WILL BE RETURNED AND MAY, THEN, ONLY BE PAID FROM THE RESUBMISSION DATE, DEPENDING ON FUNDING AVAILABILITY.

(B) TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CHILDCARER

Childminder's Name: _____

Full Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone No: _____

DECLARATION

I declare that:

I am a Registered Childminder/crèche/nursery with a Health & Social Services Board, (FE College to confirm Registration).

I am willing to care for the child(ren) named at a cost of £ **per hour/ per day /per week**

Care will be provided on the following days:

DAY/ HOURS	Mon		Tue		Wed		Thur		Fri	
	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish

I agree to provide a statement of the weekly hours involved.

Retainer charges for term and summer breaks: _____

(Please note: Summer Retainer Charges only applicable if student is on a two/three-year programme).

I have read and agree with the terms and conditions in the guidance note (page 15).

NB: Charges for Care to Learn applicants should be no more than for any other parent.

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** ____/____/____

Name of Bank / Building Society		_____															
Address		_____															

Sort Code																	
Account Number																	
Bank A/C Name, as appears exactly on your bank statement (e.g. Miss S Smyth or Susan Smyth or Ms S Smyth)																	

**PLEASE SUBMIT ORIGINALS OF ALL DOCUMENTS WHICH APPLY.
ALL ORIGINAL DOCUMENTATION WILL BE RETURNED
FOLLOWING VALIDATION**

CARE TO LEARN (NI): GUIDANCE NOTES

Students

1. To be eligible, a student must, during their course of study, be, or become:
 - the main carer of their child(ren);
 - at least 16 years old; and
 - under 20 years of age, at the start of their course of study; and
 - meet residency requirements, in accordance with the Further Education (Student Support) (Eligibility) Regulations (NI).
2. Assistance under Care to Learn (NI) will not be available to any student until his/her sixteenth birthday. Students, under the minimum school-leaving age, who are studying at an FE college, will not be eligible for assistance under the Care to Learn (NI) Scheme, but should be referred to the Education Welfare Service of the Education Authority.
3. A student, receiving assistance under the Care to Learn (NI) scheme, who becomes 20 years of age during their course of study, may remain on the scheme.
4. Students their partner or parents / guardians of students in receipt of childcare support from other sources for the student's child/children, such as Child Tax Credits / Universal Credit (where childcare provision is included), Childcare Grant etc., are not eligible for assistance under Care to Learn (NI). (Any childcare hours being requested for Care to Learn payments must not already be being funded from Child Tax Credits / Universal Credit);

Courses

5. The scheme is open to full-time and part-time FE students and HE students enrolled in an FE college on regulated professional and technical courses, listed on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ). This covers regulated courses from Entry Level to Level 5.

Childcare provision

6. The childcare provider must be a childminder, pre-school playgroup, day nursery, out-of-school club, or other provider, registered with the Health & Social Services Board.
7. The choice of child carer is the sole responsibility of student/parent. The college should accept no responsibility in relation to risks, accidents, or payments owing outside any approved period.

The Colleges will seek and Retain

- Confirmation of the Childminder's Registration to establish their eligibility;
 - a copy of the original birth certificate of the applicant and his/her child/children (long birth certificate for the child/children);
 - a signed statement from the childminder, in order for payment to be made directly to the carer (the parent should be advised of the payment procedure beforehand);
 - a copy of any benefits received; and
 - a copy of the student's timetable.
8. Students may change their childcare provider (for example, because they are unhappy with the childcare being provided, or they have found a more convenient provider), on condition that he/she meets the required criteria. However, the agreement of the college should be sought before any change.

Assistance available

9. Assistance will be provided on the basis of actual costs of childcare, including any deposit normally required, and reasonable associated travel costs to and from the childcarer, where these costs are in addition to normal travel costs from home to college, (note: where more than one child is involved, reduced costs may apply, particularly in relation to travel costs).
10. The maximum assistance available for all costs including travel, associated with registered childcare is up to £165 per week for each child.
11. Childcare costs may include a retainer fee or contract payments to the childcarer to ensure the childcare place is kept available during such periods as term and summer breaks. Please note that summer retainer fees will only apply where students are completing a two-year course of study.

Attendance

12. Childcare assistance will only be provided for the period of time required to allow the parent to attend his/her course of study. The college will consult the student's attendance record in deciding whether childcare support should continue.
 - Where attendance is less than 80%, the actual amount is determined by the % attendance.
 - Where attendance falls below 60%, the student should be referred to the Student Support Officer for consideration.
13. Payments will be made in arrears on a term/monthly/weekly basis.

More information: Colleges should refer to **Circular FE 03/17 (20/06/2017)** for further information.